

Coins

Acids solve a dating puzzle, but value vanishes

By Roger Boye

HERE ARE more questions from my reader mailbag:

Q—We've found some old United States nickels and quarters, but the dates have disappeared from all of them. Is there anything we can do with the coins to find out the year they were made?—A. A., Chicago.

A—Most likely, your coins are buffalo nickels made from 1913 to 1938, and standing Liberty quarters made from 1916 to 1930. Because the date was one of the highest features on both of those coins and was not protected by other parts of the design, it wore off rather quickly in circulation.

It is possible to purchase acids [advertised in numismatics publications] which will "restore" the dates. However, a "restored date" coin is

easily identifiable, and most collectors find them undesirable. Thus, coins with restored dates have little numismatic value.

Q—Recently, I inherited a large number of Canadian coins and bills. I know nothing about them, and am wondering if you could recommend a book that I can buy.—G.R., Evanston.

A—The most popular book on Canadian coins and currency is "Standard Catalogue of Canadian Coins, Tokens, and Paper Money," by J. E. Charlton. The 1977 edition can be purchased in most coin stores and in some bookstores for \$4.50.

In addition to the historical and explanatory material, the book gives approximate retail value of Canadian numismatic items.

Q—Back in 1914 I was helping my father dig a basement in central Illinois. In the soil I

found a medal about the size of a silver dollar. It seems to be made of bronze and has a small hole near the rim. On one side appears a sphinx, rising sun, three pyramids, and some writing. Could you tell me that this could be?—H.D., Chicago.

A—I asked for help on your question from Robert D. Leonard Jr., editor of the Illinois Numismatic Association Coin Digest. Leonard says you have a piece of jewelry, not a numismatic item.

"If he hadn't said it was found in 1914," Leonard says, "I would have guessed it to be from the 1920s, when a great Egyptian revival took place following the opening of Tutankhamen's tomb in 1922. As it is, it is apparently from an earlier period of Egyptian art revival, circa 1880-1890."